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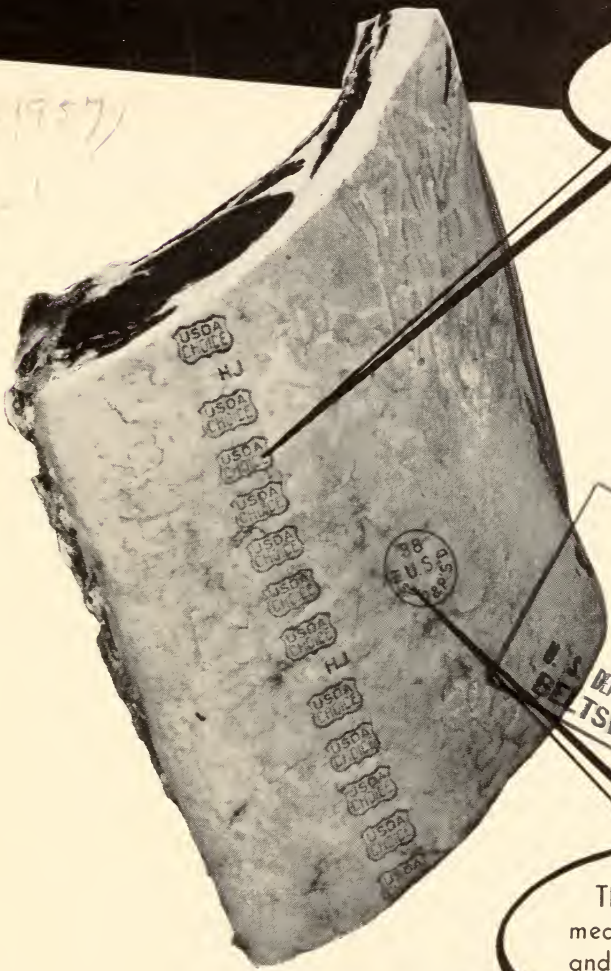
U. S. GRADES FOR BEEF



This stamp shows that the meat was Federally graded.

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
BELTSVILLE BRANCH

This stamp shows that the meat was Federally inspected and passed as wholesome food.

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

LEAFLET NO. 310

ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF FEDERAL GRADING OF MEAT

The Federal grading and stamping of beef was started by the U. S. Department of Agriculture on May 1, 1927. The initial request for establishing a grading service originated with a producer organization known as the Better Beef Association. The Association was made up of producers and their representatives from all of the leading cattle producing areas. It was their conclusion that some official yardstick for measuring quality was needed to give the consumer-buyer confidence in his purchase and, indirectly, thereby to encourage the production of better beef cattle.

At the outset, the Department set up a beef grading program on an experimental basis in 10 major meat market centers. In 1928, the service was established on a self-supporting basis by charging fees for the service to packers requesting grading. From this very small beginning, grading was extended to include veal, calf, lamb, and mutton and the demand for graded meats has continued to increase to the extent that, at present (1957), a staff of some 450 supervisors and graders is required to perform the services requested by the trade. Grading service is now available in practically every section of the United States wherever livestock is slaughtered and meat is sold.

All segments of the livestock and meat industry, from producer to consumer, benefit from the nationwide Federal meat grading program because it contributes greatly to the overall efficiency of marketing.

Revised 1957

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U. S. GRADES FOR BEEF

The purpose of this leaflet is to give consumers and others a brief explanation of United States grades for beef—and to show how the selection of meat can be made easier for the consumer-buyer—from the most inexperienced homemakers to the large quantity users of meat.

Success in preparing any meat dish—the concern of all cooks—begins with the selection of a suitable quality and cut of meat. The second step toward assuring success is the preparation of the meat by an appropriate method.

To provide consumers with a reliable guide to meat quality, the United States Department of Agriculture for many years has made Federal meat grading available on a voluntary basis except in times of national emergency when compulsory grading may be required.

This leaflet summarizes facts about the United States grades for carcass beef and points out how they can be used as as aid in more efficient purchasing.

FEDERAL MEAT GRADES AID CONSUMERS

The Federal grade stamp on meat provides consumers with a reliable guide to quality.

Each grade name is associated with a specific degree of quality, thus enabling consumers to utilize meat most efficiently by preparing it in the manner for which it is best suited.

FEDERAL MEAT STAMPS

The Federal grade stamp on meat is easily identified. It is a purple ribbonlike stamp that appears on practically all retail cuts. The grade name and the letters USDA—meaning United States Department of Agriculture—are enclosed in a shield. This shield-type stamp is registered in the United States Patent Office and only officials of the Department of Agriculture are authorized to use it.

Do not confuse the Federal grade stamp with the Federal meat inspection stamp either in appearance or in meaning. The grade stamp denotes quality. The round stamp, which reads "U. S. Insp'd & P' S' D'," is the symbol of Federal meat inspection and is your assurance that the meat was wholesome at the time it was inspected. The illustration on the cover page shows the two stamps.

MEAT SELECTION

Quality in meat is highly variable and is most difficult to recognize in retail cuts. The meat grader, who places the Federal grade stamp on meat, is an expert in judging meat quality.

Learn the grade that is best suited to your needs. Remember, also, that the proper selection of cuts is important. A Good grade T-bone steak, for example, will be more tender than a Choice grade round steak.

FEDERAL BEEF GRADES

There are eight official grades for carcass beef. Six of these—Prime, Choice, Good, Standard, Commercial, and Utility—may be found in retail stores. Most retailers sell only the grade or grades

that are requested or deemed to meet the needs of their customers. The grade name appearing on the grade stamp can be used to serve the consumer in two important ways—(1) as a guide to quality and (2) as a guide to preparation.

Beef of each grade will provide a satisfactory dish if appropriately cooked. The degree of quality which is associated with each of the grades is briefly discussed in the paragraphs that follow:

As the name implies, beef of this grade is highly acceptable and palatable. Prime grade beef is produced from young and well-fed beef-type cattle. The youth of the cattle and the careful intensive feeding which it has had combine to produce very high quality cuts of beef. Such cuts have liberal quantities of fat interspersed within the lean (marbling). These characteristics contribute greatly to the juiciness, tenderness, and flavor of the meat. Rib roasts and loin steaks of this grade are consistently tender and cuts from the round and chuck should also be highly satisfactory.

This grade is preferred by most consumers because it is of high quality but usually has less fat than beef of the Prime grade. More of this grade of beef is produced than of any other grade. Choice beef is usually available the year-round in substantial quantity. Roasts and steaks from the loin and rib are tender and juicy and other cuts, such as those from the round or chuck which are more suitable for braising and pot roasting, should be tender with a well-developed flavor.

This grade pleases thrifty consumers who seek beef with little fat but with an acceptable degree of quality. Although cuts of this grade lack the juiciness associated with a higher degree of fatness, their relative tenderness and high proportion of lean to fat make them the preference of many people.

Standard grade beef has a very thin covering of fat and appeals to consumers whose primary concern is a high proportion of lean. When properly prepared, such beef is usually relatively tender. It is mild in flavor and lacks the juiciness usually found in beef with more marbling.

Beef that is graded Commercial is produced from older cattle and usually lacks the tenderness of the higher grades. Cuts from this grade, if carefully prepared, can be made into satisfactory and economical meat dishes. Most cuts require long slow cooking with moist heat to make them tender and to develop the rich, full, beef flavor characteristic of mature beef.

Beef of this grade is produced mostly from cattle somewhat advanced in age and is usually lacking in natural tenderness and juiciness. The cuts of this grade, as they appear in the retail markets, carry very little fat but provide a palatable, economical source of lean meat for pot roasting, stewing, boiling, or ground-meat dishes. For satisfactory results, long, slow cooking by moist heat is essential.

OTHER GRADES

There are also two other grades of beef—Cutter and Canner. These are ordinarily used in processed meat products and are rarely, if ever, sold as cuts in retail stores.

OTHER MEATS GRADED

Veal, calf, lamb, and mutton are also federally graded. In addition to the grade name that identifies the quality of the meat, the kind of meat is also indicated as veal, calf, yearling mutton, and mutton. This identification appears with the grade stamp on retail cuts as illustrated below.

VEAL CALF

INSTITUTIONAL SERVICE

Since 1923 the Federal Meat Grading Service has assisted organizations, such as government agencies, private institutions, and other purveyors of meals, in their meat procurement programs. This service involves (1) assisting the purchaser in the development of specifications to assure accurate and uniform interpretation, and (2) the examination of the product to assure its compliance with the specifications. Upon acceptance, each piece or package is stamped, as illustrated below, and the purchaser is furnished with an official certificate containing pertinent information about the product.

BEEF CHART

Wholesale and Retail Cuts

Numerals in circles ○ refer to wholesale cuts and major subdivisions of such cuts. Letters refer to retail cuts.

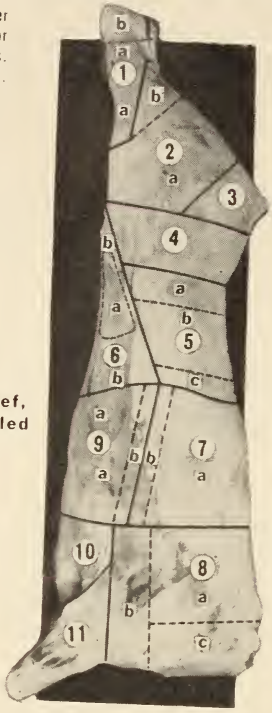
① HIND SHANK
- a. Soup bones
- b. Hock

⑥ FLANK
- a. Flank steak
- b. Stew or ground beef

⑨ PLATE
- a. Stew, ground beef, or boned and rolled pot roasts
- b. Short ribs

⑩ BRISKET
Stew or boned and rolled pot roasts

⑪ FORE SHANK
Soup bones or ground beef



② ROUND
- a. Round steaks or roasts
- b. Pot roast

③ RUMP
Roasts or steaks

④ LOIN END
Sirloin steaks or roasts

⑤ SHORT LOIN
- a. Porterhouse steaks
- b. T-bone steaks
- c. Club or Delmonico steaks

⑦ RIB
- a. Rib roasts or steaks
- b. Short ribs

⑧ CHUCK
- a. Chuck rib roasts or steaks
- b. Arm pot roasts or steaks
- c. Stew or ground beef

YIELDS OF WHOLESALE CUTS AND SUBDIVISIONS
Percentage of Carcass Weight

① to ⑥	**HINDQUARTER**	48.0%
① to ③	Round and Rump	24.0%
①	Hind shank	4.0%
②	Buttock	15.5
③	Rump	4.5
④ and ⑤	Full loin inc. suet	20.5
④	Loin end	9.0
⑤	Short loin	8.0
	Kidney knob	3.5
⑥	Flank	3.5

⑦ to ⑪	**FOREQUARTER**	52.0%
⑦	Rib	9.5%
⑧	Chuck	24.5
⑨	Plate	8.0
⑩	Brisket	6.0
⑪	Fore shank	4.0

SUGGESTED COOKING GUIDE

The use of an appropriate method of cooking is essential to bring out the desirable eating qualities of the specific cut and grade selected. Below is a guide suggesting the most generally accepted method of cooking retail cuts of beef of each grade.

Flank, plate, brisket, foreshank, and the heel of the round should be prepared in the same manner for all grades of beef. These less tender cuts are used for stewing, braising, pot roasting, or boiling, or are ground for use in meat loaves and similar dishes.

Cut	Prime	Choice	Good	Standard	Commercial	Utility
Bottom round	Braise or pot roast.	Braise or pot roast.	Braise or pot roast.	Braise or pot roast.	Braise or pot roast.	Braise or pot roast.
Top round	Broil, pan fry, or braise.	Broil, pan fry, or braise.	Braise	Braise	Braise.	Braise.
Rump	Roast or pot roast.	Roast or pot roast.	Pot roast	Pot roast	Pot roast	Pot roast.
Sirloin	Broil or roast	Broil or roast	Broil or roast	Broil, pan fry, or braise.	Pan fry or braise	Braise.
Porterhouse	Broil	Broil	Broil	Broil, pan fry, or braise.	Pan fry or braise	Braise.
T-bone	Broil	Broil	Broil	Broil, pan fry, or braise.	Pan fry or braise	Braise.
Club	Broil	Broil	Broil	Broil, pan fry, or braise.	Pan fry or braise	Braise.
Rib roast	Roast	Roast	Roast	Roast or pot roast.	Roast or pot roast.	Pot roast.
Blade chuck	Roast or pot roast.	Roast or pot roast.	Roast or pot roast.	Pot roast	Pot roast	Pot roast.
Shoulder arm roast	Roast or pot roast.	Pot roast	Pot roast	Pot roast	Pot roast	Pot roast.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

1. Grades are based on definite Federal grade standards that are applied by highly skilled, impartial, Federal meat graders in the same uniform manner from season to season and year to year without regard to supply and demand or other economic conditions.

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2. The long ribbonlike stamp with the grade name enclosed in a shield indicates the quality. The round stamp indicates the meat is wholesome. Do not confuse the stamps.

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3. Remember that all the grades are good for some purpose. When planning a meal, first decide the type of meat dish to be prepared, and then select the cut and the grade that will assure satisfaction.

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